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Time to shovel



Delays cost condo, says developer

RESIDENTIAL TOWERS

Logistical issues with city put an end to the project

Alex
Boyd
Metro | Edmonton

The developer of the now-cancelled Corners towers project says plans fell victim to disagreements with the city over land expropriated for the Valley Line LRT as well as issues obtaining permits.

Claudio Raimondi of Edmonton-based BCM Homes told Metro in an email that land was "expropriation for LRT purposes of the sister tower, on the southwest corner" of the intersection in The Quarters where the building was to be con-

structed, and that caused logistical issues and delays.

Raimondi also said BCM Homes was unable to secure permits for the 28-storey condo development "without additional geo-technical assessment due to proximity of the site to coal seams."

This summer, it was reported that the site at Jasper Avenue and 95th Street, where two residential towers were planned to be located, is potentially near several historic coal mines.

While Raimondi says he still believes the condo project is viable with some adjustments, his company "had little choice but to let the project go."

Lesley Vaage, a communications representative from the city, said it was "in the process of selling the property to a developer, pending certain conditions being met."

"The conditions weren't met, so the sale did not proceed," Vaage said. "The city has secured the land and is now assessing next steps for the property."

The city has previously stated they're looking into multiple options in order to get something built on the site as soon as possible.

“

The conditions
weren't met, so
the sale did not go
ahead.

Lesley Vaage



A GOOD CUT

Hair institution Barber Ha donated all proceeds from haircuts Sunday to Syrian refugees. Coverage, metroNEWS

TIM QUERENGESSER/METRO

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Advocate raises concerns about Blatchford project

HOUSING

Accessibility, visitability are top challenges

Alex Boyd
Metro | Edmonton

The new Blatchford development is billed as “a new standard for vibrant, liveable and healthy communities,” but one of Edmonton’s top accessibility advocates fears that won’t include some people with disabilities.

Shelley Thompson is with

the Visitability Taskforce and questions why the city has been so forward thinking about sustainability, but not accessibility.

“The city has done a fantastic job of making our public spaces accessible, and they keep talking about how Blatchford is going to be so diverse and inclusive,” she says.

“So we’ve been challenging them by saying, ‘Why are we stopping shy of (doing the same) for private homes?’”

Thompson defines a “visit-able” home as one that has a no-step entrance, a wider door and front hallway and an accessible bathroom on the ground floor.



The city has done a fantastic job of making our public spaces accessible, and they keep talking about how Blatchford is going to be so diverse and inclusive.

Shelley Thompson

Blatchford is planned to eventually house up to 30,000 people and, according to the city website, housing “will be designed to meet the needs of people at all stages of life.” There will be only low- and mid-rise apartments or townhomes.

Under the Alberta Human Rights Act workplaces, busi-

nesses, public services and educational institutions must accommodate disability, but it doesn’t apply to private homes. But Thompson says that if the city is requiring extra accommodation for sustainability, the same should be done for accessibility.

Coun. Andrew Knack says city

council has asked for a report on accessible design that he hopes will outline ways for it to be incorporated into Blatchford.

“We didn’t want to get too far down the road with Blatchford if there’s something we need to do particularly soon so we don’t miss the opportunities to build it.”

He notes that while there are “perceived challenges” with accessible designs, it’s something that would benefit not only those with mobility issues but young families and an aging population.

The report will be going back to council in mid-January.

BUDGET

Cleanup costing less than expected

The environmental cleanup at the future home of the Blatchford development is so far costing far less than expected.

The remediation of the home of the former City Centre Airport is in its second phase, which called for contaminated soil to be removed from five sites, a process projected to cost \$2.5 million.

But it has actually cost just \$1.3 million.

Buildings associated with the airport leaked contaminants like fuel, oil, grease and solvents into the ground. Crews removed 21,000 tonnes of soil from the former locations of the buildings and transported it to a facility that manages contaminants.

“The next step in the process is the construction of utilities and roads as well as the builder selection process, which we expect will begin in 2016,” Blatchford Redevelopment executive director Mark Hall said in a release.

ALEX BOYD/METRO



The new development is planned to house up to 30,000 people, and “will be designed to meet the needs of people at all stages of life.” CONTRIBUTED

8

Since construction began the city has cleaned up eight of 15 sites expected to require remediation.

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Naloxone treatment kits can now be prescribed by medical professionals. METRO FILE

Province eases its rules on naloxone

OVERDOSES

Looser rules allow greater usage of life-saving drug



Andrea Ross
Metro | Edmonton

The Alberta government has loosened restrictions on which medical professionals can administer and prescribe naloxone, the drug used to prevent fentanyl overdoses.

Registered nurses — who already administer and distribute naloxone — will now be able to prescribe the opioid blocker. Paramedics, who could previously only distribute naloxone, can now administer the drug.

Emergency medical technicians and responders can now administer and distribute it as well.

"We welcome the minister's order today to allow more front-line practitioners the ability to administer and distribute naloxone," paramedic Darren Sandbeck said.

"I think this gives us an-

other tool in our kit to address the fentanyl issue we are facing in this province. It makes the system better by allowing additional practitioners to administer (naloxone)."

The changes will be in effect until July 1, 2016, and can be renewed if necessary.

Last year, there were 120 overdose deaths in the province related to fentanyl. From Jan. 1 to Sept. 30 this year, there were 213 deaths related to the drug.

Fentanyl is about 100 times more toxic than morphine, heroin or oxycodone, and a small amount can be dead-

ly. Naloxone can reverse a fentanyl overdose if taken in time.

Allowing Alberta's front-line medical professionals to prescribe, administer and distribute naloxone could save lives, Minister of Health Sarah Hoffman said in a media release.

"Too many Albertans' lives have been cut short by fentanyl, and too many Alberta families have experienced the devastating loss of a loved one due to an accidental overdose," she said.

"Naloxone is proven to reduce overdose deaths."

REACTION

Family welcomes Alberta Health changes



Jeremy Simes
For Metro | Calgary

Ashley Zamko wonders if a dose of naloxone could have saved her sister's life.

Zamko's sister, Jaidyn, died in August from an overdose of fentanyl, and according to Ashley, paramedics didn't have the potentially life-saving antidote on hand.

"I'm not sure if it would've saved her life," Ashley said. "But it would've been that extra chance she could've had."

Ashley's comments come on the heels of a recent order by Health Minister Sarah Hoffman

that effectively allows medical professionals to administer and prescribe naloxone, an antidote for someone experiencing an opioid overdose.

Ashley said she knows someone who was saved by naloxone.

"They did have it with them and were injected," she said. "I feel like if they didn't have it (administered), they would've passed away."

Jaidyn — who would be turning 22 this month — struggled with addiction, but was on track to get clean, Ashley said.

She swore she knew the difference between fentanyl pills and other opiates, telling her family she would be careful.



Jaidyn Zamko, who died of an overdose this year. CONTRIBUTED

Ashley said Jaidyn must have taken the pill by mistake — something many do.

The drug normally comes in tablet form, but can be hidden in other drugs, especially what's often passed off on the street as OxyContin.

"It's sad how many people we're losing to this drug," Ashley said. "If this (government order) means the chance an extra life could be saved, then they should carry (naloxone) with them."

Tim Essington, registrar with the Alberta College of Paramedics, said the organization is pleased with the new order.

"Paramedics, EMTs and EMRs are often the first on scene to treat those who have overdosed on fentanyl or other drugs," Essington said.

LABOUR RELATIONS

Farm safety bill moving forward

Premier Rachel Notley received a rousing ovation from party members for her farm safety bill Saturday, and she later said cabinet will begin formulating the next steps on it in the coming days.

Notley, in her speech, said her government made mistakes explaining the legislation, but said that doesn't change its fundamental underlying intent.

"People in paid employment have the right to be safe at work in every workplace," Notley told the 350 members filling the chairs and standing along the walls of an auditorium at MacEwan University.

"And that, my friends, is a principle the NDP has fought



People in paid employment have the right to be safe at work.

Rachel Notley

The applause and cheers went on for just under a minute. Some chanted "Rachel! Rachel!" Others, but not all, turned the ovation into a standing one.

Farmers held numerous protest rallies and jammed consultation sessions over the past two weeks to berate and swear at Notley's cabinet ministers over Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act.

Energy Minister Marg McCuaig Boyd — from the rural riding of Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley — broke down in tears in the house Thursday, saying she had become overwhelmed by the hate mail and vitriol.

The act gives workers compensation benefits to paid farm workers injured on the job as of Jan. 1, 2016.

It also puts farms under Occupational Health and Safety

rules as of Jan. 1. Farms must meet a basic standard of care until specific rules and regulations are rolled out in the coming year to 18 months.

Notley's government passed the legislation Thursday despite vocal and, at times, angry opposition from other parties and from some farmers.

Opponents, led by the Wildrose and Progressive Conservative parties say the bill moves too far too fast and that more discussion is needed.

Some farmers fear the legislation will destroy the profitability of their operations by burying them in reams of paperwork. Others worry the rules will prevent moms and dads from passing the farm culture on to their kids.

The government brought some of the anger and confusion on itself when it introduced the bill last month, saying children on farms will be subject to Occupational Health and Safety regulations.

Last week, it passed an amendment stipulating that the rules apply only to paid farm workers. Any family member on a farm, paid or unpaid, is not subject to workers compensation or occupational health and safety rules.

Notley said her cabinet will meet next week to begin deciding how the consultation process will work to adapt safety, labour relations, and employment standard rules to the unique needs of each agri-industry.

She said it will likely start out with specific technical working groups meeting with stakeholders in each area.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish addresses the ninth annual human rights awards held by the John Humphrey Centre in Edmonton.

TRINA MOYLES/FOR METRO

Nobel winner, noble man

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS

Famed doctor challenges all to work for social justice

Trina Moyles
For Metro | Edmonton

A three-time Nobel Peace prize nominee known as the "Gaza Doctor" inspired award-winning Edmonton human rights workers Sunday as he told them his story and why he works for peace.

"There is no greater challenge facing the world than

the lack of personal responsibility to work for justice," said Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish, a Palestinian doctor and internationally renowned peace activist, who spoke at the ninth annual awards held at the Arts Barn by the John Humphrey Centre.

Dr. Abuelaish congratulated the evening's award winners — Bernadette Lahtail, Nicholas Ameyaw, Carla Krause-Clark, Renee Laporte, Judy Lytton and Danielle Moore — for their efforts to make a difference in the lives of people in their community.

He spoke with emotion about growing up in Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, where he faced poverty and inequality.

"I never felt my childhood," he said. "But I used to ask myself, 'Why am I alive and what can I do?'"

Dr. Abuelaish left Gaza to study obstetrics at the University of London and earned a degree at Harvard University before becoming the first Palestinian doctor to be appointed at an Israeli hospital.

But in 2009, an Israeli tank attacked his home in Gaza,

killing his three daughters, who were 21, 15 and 13 years old, along with his 17-year-old niece.

The tragedy moved Dr. Abuelaish to become an advocate for peace and human rights. He moved to Toronto the following year and published the best-selling book entitled *I Shall Not Hate*.

He also founded the Daughters for Life Foundation, in memory of his daughters, to support scholarships for young women living in the Middle East.

"People can oppress, deprive, imprison, and torture, but no one can prevent us from dreaming of peace and reconciliation," said Dr. Abuelaish.



No one can prevent us from dreaming of peace and reconciliation.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

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Premier gets death threats

SOCIAL MEDIA

Opponents to Bill 6 'need to stop' violent comment: Jean



Andrea Ross
Metro | Edmonton

The leader of Alberta's official Opposition is condemning violent threats against Premier Rachel Notley that were recently posted on social media.

Dozens of threatening comments have surfaced online by people upset about Bill 6, new legislation that will extend workers' compensation coverage for paid farmers and ranchers.

"Someone's gotta man up and kill her," one person wrote on Facebook. "Burn down parliament and put a pitchfork through notleys neck?" he continued.

"Anybody else in a rioting mood?" another Facebook user asked.



Alberta Premier Rachel Notley is the subject of online vitriol. DEAN BENNETT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In the statement posted on Facebook Friday, Wildrose Party Leader Brian Jean said he understands the new legislation has sparked contention and emotion from its opponents.

But he urged his audience to keep discussing these issues

These kinds of comments cross all bounds of respect and decency.

Wildrose Leader Brian Jean

in a "safe, respectful and productive way."

"Over the past few days, I've seen far too many hateful and even violent social media posts directed towards our political opponents," Jean wrote on Facebook.

"This needs to stop. These

kinds of comments cross all bounds of respect and decency and have absolutely no place in our political discourse."

On Thursday, Premier Notley said her government will continue to move forward with "robust" consultation on how further regulations are developed.

"There's no question there were a very small group of people opposed to Bill-6 who took their opposition too far, and that is regrettable," she said.

On Friday, the RCMP said on Twitter they had received "a number" of posts regarding online comments directed at public figures, and thanked the public for their concern.

Cpl. Hal Turnbull said he was not aware of any investigation into the matter forwarded from Alberta's sheriffs tasked with the Premier's security, but said the RCMP would participate in an investigation if asked.

"If they're looking at a criminal investigation, they could come to the RCMP or the Edmonton Police Service," he said.

VILE HISTORY

Sadly, Premier Rachel Notley is not the first Alberta provincial-level politician to have her life threatened.

- In 2012, a highly-charged Progressive Conservative nomination race in the Calgary-McCall riding led to threats being sent to Dale Galbraith, then the head of the PC constituency association.

- Also that year, a Calgary resident sent letters to media outlets with a warning to former Premier Alison Redford that she would smile less smugly if she had a "hole in the head."

- In 2014, a man wrapped in a bitter custody suit for his child also vented his frustration at Redford, texting that both she and her daughter would pay for his pain.

- In early 2015, after nine Wildrose MLAs, including then-leader Danielle Smith, crossed the floor in the Alberta legislature to join the PC government, Airdrie MLA Rob Anderson's life was threatened over email and the RCMP was called in to provide his family with surveillance. METRO

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The Jim Pattison
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Edmonton's housing market will not be affected by new rules for mortgage down payments, says one expert, but people may react regardless. KEVIN TUONG/FOR METRO

Mortgage rules create 'pullback'

REAL ESTATE

Efforts to cool home market will have 'zero' effect: Expert



Tim Querengesser
Metro | Edmonton

Newly created mortgage rules aimed at cooling housing markets in Vancouver and Toronto will have "zero" effect on the housing market for first-time homebuyers in Edmonton, according to one expert.

But Elton Ash, regional executive vice-president with Remax Western Canada, says announcements like these nevertheless tend to create an "immediate pullback" in the market as people don't ne-

cessarily read the fine details. Buyers, he said, "don't hear the rest of the story."

Under changes announced Friday by federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, home buyers will have to put a 10 per cent down payment on the portion of the price of a home over \$500,000.

Anything under \$500,000 will still only require a five per cent down payment. The changes are to take effect Feb. 15, 2016.

"This will impact 1 per cent or less of the market," Morneau told a news conference.

Ash agreed, and said the effect of the changes will be "minimal" in Edmonton and Calgary.

"For markets in Vancouver, Toronto, the government is trying to get a little more control there," Ash said Sunday. "In those two markets it certainly

will increase the challenge for first-time home-buyers to get into a home — they'll need a bigger down payment. But the reality in the rest of the country is it's going to be minimal effect."

Ash said Remax's recent yearly home-price survey forecast the average price of a house in Edmonton to drop in 2016, down to \$360,000. Since most first-time homebuyers are often buying homes below the average price, that means the vast majority of buyers in Edmonton will still be able to buy a house with just five per cent down.

Ash said he anticipates the luxury home section of the Edmonton home construction market to cool in 2016 as there are indications there is too much supply and dwindling demand. "I'm sure the builders will be reacting," he said. "They will pull back on everything."

CROSSWALK ACCIDENT

Witnesses, 4 cars sought by police

Police are searching for the drivers of four vehicles, one of them a taxi, who might have witnessed a driver hitting and killing a 54-year-old male pedestrian on Dec. 4 at 118 Avenue and 55 Street.

The drivers of a black Kia Soul, red Mazda Protégé, white Toyota Camry Co-op Taxi and a black four-door are being sought after accident investigators found a photo of the intersection just before the accident from a photo radar vehicle.

A 21-year-old male driving a



The intersection at 118 Avenue and 55 Street. SUPPLIED

Chevrolet Malibu allegedly struck the pedestrian, who died of his injuries at the scene. METRO FILE

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The Power to Surprise



Chickpeas flood city food bank

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Generous company delivers needed legumes

Trina Moyles
For Metro | Edmonton

"It was the human thing to do," says Chris Chivilo, head of W.A. Grain & Pulse Solutions in Innisfail, which donated 1.8 tonnes — an entire truck's worth — of chickpeas to the Edmonton Food Bank Saturday.

It's a timely donation given the recent arrival of Syrian refugees to Edmonton. Chickpeas are a nutritious legume and the staple food of the Middle Eastern diet.

Last month, Islamic Family and Social Services (IFSSA) called Chivilo to say they were looking for donations of leg-

umes like chickpeas and lentils for the growing number of families who see them as a staple in Edmonton.

The agency recently partnered with Edmonton's Food Bank to help supply food to vulnerable Islamic families in the city.

Chickpeas are one of the most difficult and expensive food items to source, says Marjorie Bencz, executive director of the food bank. She anticipates that the donation will supply families with chickpeas until the end of March 2016. They will be distributed through hamper programs and meals offered throughout the community.

The food bank says 21.5 per cent more people are relying on food hampers than in October 2014. Over the past three years, the organization has seen a staggering 37 per cent increase of people in need.

Bencz says that social service agencies often forget about agricultural players in the



They're a huge sector in Alberta and we should be supporting them.

Marjorie Bencz

province and their ability to support vulnerable families.

"They're a huge sector in Alberta and we should be supporting them, as they're supporting us. We appreciate their support," Bencz says.

Chivilo says the chickpeas were locally grown and sourced from over a million acres of farmland in southern Alberta. The grain distributor says he was happy to help at time when the first Syrian refugees are reaching Edmonton.

"Typically we grow (chickpeas) and ship them out of the country," says Chivilo. "But considering the need, it makes sense to keep them here in Canada."



IMMIGRATION PERSONAL CONNECTION Indy Seera braves his first straight-razor shave at Barber Ha Sunday. The barbershop's founder, Linda Ha, said she has a personal connection to the experience of refugees that has compelled her desire to give back. A Catholic church in St. Albert sponsored her family's immigration to Canada before she was born. Staff volunteered their time Sunday and all proceeds from haircuts, straight shaves, a bake sale and merchandise were sent to St. Joseph's College, which has a refugee fund. METRO



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Newly arrived Syrian refugee Samer Beylouneh, left, wipes a tear as his daughter Laila greets her aunt Marie Belona at a welcome centre in Montreal on Saturday. PAUL CHIASSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

‘Their arrival is a Christmas present’

SYRIAN REFUGEES

Anas Fransis reunited with relatives after 8 years

The arrival of a second federal government planeload of Syrian refugees in Montreal Saturday night was “a real Christmas present” for one Syrian man who was reunited with family he hasn’t seen in eight years.

Anas Fransis and his mother were at the welcome centre near the airport to welcome Fransis’ uncle and his wife, their two teenage daughters

+ B.C.-BOUND

Relatives of drowned boy to arrive by year’s end

The aunt of a Syrian toddler whose lifeless body pictured on a Mediterranean beach sparked global outrage over a refugee crisis says the flights have been booked to bring her relatives to Canada.

Tima Kurdi says her brother Mohammad Kurdi,

along with his wife and five children, are scheduled to arrive in British Columbia on Dec. 28.

Mohammad is the uncle of Alan Kurdi, the three-year-old boy who died with his mother and older brother when their overcrowded boat flipped while crossing between Turkey and Greece. THE CANADIAN PRESS

and Fransis’ grandmother, who were among the 161 privately sponsored refugees to make the trip from Beirut to Canada

aboard a government aircraft.

Fransis ran out to greet them, twirling his cousins and embracing the adults. His

grandmother, Laila Saeed, was the last one through the door, her face wet with tears.

“They’ll be here for Christmas, they’ll be here for New Year’s,” said Fransis, who came to Canada from Syria in 2008. “Their arrival is a Christmas present ... a real Christmas present.”

His 13-year-old cousin Laila Beylouneh was excited for her family’s new start.

“My future is starting now,” she said in English. “I wish all my dreams will come true.”

The arrival comes less than 48 hours after a government aircraft brought 163 refugees to Toronto on Thursday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

VANCOUVER

City wants cash for tree replacements



Emily Jackson
Metro | Vancouver

The City of Vancouver doesn’t trust residents to replace trees when they uproot old ones, so it wants to demand a cash deposit until residents can prove they’re proper tree parents.

The city wants owners to pay a security deposit of \$500 or \$750 (depending on the size) when they remove a tree, money the government will keep until owners prove they have planted a new tree and taken good care of it for at least a year, according to a report council will vote on this week.

There is a one-for-one replacement rule for tree removal, but between 25 and 35 per cent of replacement trees die or are removed within their

first year, according to the city.

The security deposit is meant to deter people from not planting the replacement tree, planting it in the wrong location, choosing a poor quality tree that won’t survive or not taking care of it properly.

It’s part of the city’s larger strategy to maintain its urban forest.

Since approximately 60 per cent of trees live on private property, the city changed its bylaws last year to require owners to get an inspector’s approval before they can remove a tree. (More than 1,700 inspections have been conducted since Oc-

tober 2014; hundreds were denied.)

Should council approve the stricter set of rules, the city will need to hire two more inspectors to monitor how well people are caring for their new trees.

60

Approximate percentage of trees that live on private property in Vancouver



A city worker plants a street tree near Vancouver’s Cambie corridor in 2014. EMILY JACKSON/METRO

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Lawyer seeks remission order



The CRA says Ramona Dunn, seen in front of her home in Exeter, Ont., owes \$94,000 in back taxes. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

RESERVES

CRA wants aboriginal employees to pay back taxes

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has been aggressively collecting back taxes from a group of mostly low-income indigenous women who lost a long-running legal battle to be exempt from paying personal income taxes because their employer was situated on a reserve.

Native Leasing Services, an employee outsourcing company that has its headquarters on Six Nations of the Grand River, a reserve near Brantford, Ont., is seeking a remission order from National Revenue Minister Diane LeBouthillier — who would have to recommend it to cabinet for approval — on behalf of 3,916 former employees.

“Most of the applicants live on or near the poverty line ... A large portion of these employees will never be able to pay the

tax assessments that have been made against them,” Jim Fyshe, a lawyer working pro-bono for Native Leasing Services, wrote in the application for a remission order filed in June 2013.

The employees, whose annual income at Native Leasing Services averaged about \$27,000, according to Fyshe, are being pursued by collections officers who are putting liens on their homes, garnishing their wages and clawing back benefits for years of personal income taxes after the courts

Leasing Services.

Dunn said she took the job at the non-profit agency for a smaller salary than she would have earned at a hospital.

“I was willing to work for less money than my skill set would have given for me just for the chance of working in my community and helping my people,” Dunn said, adding the tax exemption, which she still believes she has a right to as a status Indian, helped make up some of the difference in take-home pay.



Never in a million years would I have thought they would go after me.

Ramona Dunn

supported a decision by Canada Revenue Agency to reinterpret the Indian Act.

One of them is Ramona Dunn, 53, who the CRA says owes nearly \$94,000 in taxes, fines and interest for the five years she worked as a registered nurse and diabetes educator at Anishnawbe Health Toronto, where she was technically an employee of Native

Now Dunn, whose severe arthritis prevents her from working full time, has remortgaged her home and the CRA threatens to put a lien on her property.

CRA spokesman Philippe Bri-deau said they could not comment on individual cases due to privacy, but said remission orders are considered on a case-by-case basis. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

INNOVATION

Trio give grinder a makeover

A group of Winnipeg entrepreneurs are busting their way into the marijuana scene by reinventing a 110-year-old design called The Clipper.

Matt Olsen said he, Greg Moneta and Jesse Marr came up with the idea to create a brand new and innovative “herb” grinder.

Olsen said the idea stems from complaints of traditional grinder users.

In addition, Olsen said his small group identified 30 brands — many of which were manufacturing their own grinders — but were all producing the same thing with subtle variations.

“We threw out that entire design,” said Olsen. “We decided to go with an entirely different method we felt solved a lot of problems associated with the old version.”

The biggest difference is a rotating stainless-steel blade and a patented wedge design that the group says cuts herbs rather than mulches them



The Clipper with its newly designed blades. CONTRIBUTED

and drastically reduces user effort.

The product’s users, such as Keely Middleton, said they are noticing a difference.

“The blade is a game changer because it doesn’t build up resin in the teeth and hinder the ability to turn and grind,” said Middleton.

“My favourite part just has to be the overall look of it,” Middleton added.

Olsen and Marr said they’re in the midst of a crowdfunding campaign via Indiegogo. They’re now in the last two-week push to hit \$25,000. So far they’ve raised \$16,000.

“We’re looking for people who are interested in being the first adopter,” said Olsen. “It’s significantly discounted from what it will retail at ... This gives people an opportunity to be the first ones to receive it.”

The group said it is in partnership with Lift Innovations and has already been approached by distributors who want to carry the product.

Olsen and Marr said they are looking to establish an e-commerce store and are building a worldwide distribution plan.

EVAN MATTHEWS/FOR METRO



We decided to go with an entirely different method.

Matt Olsen

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f t p i

Marine Le Pen draws a blank

FRANCE

National Front fail to take a single region in election

Marine Le Pen's far-right National Front collapsed in French regional elections Sunday, failing to take a single region after dominating the first round of voting, pollsters projected. The conservatives surged against the governing Socialists, changing the political map of France.

The failure of the National Front to gain any of the six regions where it was leading didn't stop the anti-immigration party from looking to the 2017 presidential election — Le Pen's ultimate goal.

Le Pen had been riding high after extremist attacks and an unprecedented wave of migration into Europe, and the party came out on top in the voting in France's 13 newly drawn regions in the first round a week ago. But projections by France's major

polling firms suggested the party lost in all of the regions Sunday, including decisive losses for both Le Pen and her popular niece.

"Here we stopped the progression of the National Front," said conservative Xavier Bertrand, who was projected to beat Le Pen in the Nord-Pas de Calais region.

Le Pen supporters in a hall in the gritty northern town of Henin-Beaumont booed his image on a big screen as he spoke. The atmosphere was grim, in stark contrast to a week earlier when Le Pen won more than 40 per cent of the vote — and was more than 15 points ahead of Bertrand. The tables turned on Sunday as Bertrand beat Le Pen by nearly 15 points.

Le Pen struck an upbeat tone despite the rout, pledging she would in the coming weeks "rally all the French, of all origins, who want to join us."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Nothing will stop us.
Marine Le Pen



MYANMAR POLITICIAN LAUNCHES CLEANUP DRIVE Leader of National League for Democracy party (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi, centre, picks garbage during a cleanup drive initiated by Suu Kyi in Kawhmu, Myanmar on Sunday. Suu Kyi led the garbage collection on early foggy Sunday in Kawhmu township of Yangon region, where she won her seat for the Lower House in the country's general election. GEMUNU AMARASINGHE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Syrian rebels strike Damascus suburb

Rebels entrenched in an eastern suburb of Damascus fired volleys of mortar shells into the Syrian capital on Sunday, killing three people, including a child, and wounding 33, Syria's state-run news agency and residents said. Government forces hit back with airstrikes that activists said killed at least 28 people.

The Damascus suburb, known as Eastern Ghouta, is held by rebels fighting to topple President Bashar Assad who often launch mortars into Damascus, his seat of power.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unrest in Burundi prompts order of evacuation

The Canadian and U.S. governments asked their citizens to leave Burundi as soon as possible Sunday after 87 people were killed Friday in an escalation of the violence surrounding the disputed third term of President Pierre Nkurunziza. The Dec. 11 fighting was deemed the worst in months of turmoil since April. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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New agreement puts the planet on a 'carbon diet'

ENVIRONMENT

Close to 200 nations sign on to ambitious Paris eco-pact

The world is about to go on a carbon diet and it won't be easy — or cheap.

Nearly 200 nations worldwide approved a first-of-its-kind universal agreement Saturday to wean Earth off fossil fuels and slow global warming.

On Sunday morning, as with many first day dieters, the reality set in. The numbers — like calorie limits and gym time — are daunting.

How daunting? Try more than 7.04 billion tons. That's how much carbon dioxide needs to stay in the ground instead of being spewed into the atmosphere for those reductions to happen — if you take the easier of two goals mentioned in Saturday's deal. To get to the harder goal, the number is even larger.

In the pact, the countries pledged to limit global warming to about another degree Celsius — and if they can, only half that much.

A vaguer goal is that by sometime in the second half of the century, man-made greenhouse gas emissions — including methane and other heat-trapping gases as well as carbon dioxide — won't exceed the amount nature absorbs. Earth's complex and ever-changing carbon cycle would have to get back to balance.

In practice, the world will have to emit almost zero greenhouse gases by 2070 to reach the easier goal, or by 2050 to reach the harder one, said John



The slogan "DECARBONIZE" is projected on the Eiffel Tower as part of the COP21 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, France on Dec. 11. FRACOIS MORI/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Schellnhuber, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in Germany.

The harder goal — limit warming by another half a degree Celsius — is probably already impossible, said Joeri Rogelj at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis in Austria. Most likely the best the world can hope for is overshooting by a few tenths of a degree and then slowly bring the temperature back down to the target.

That may involve something called negative emissions, a system in which the world (technology and nature combined) take out more carbon dioxide from the air than humanity

7.04
Volume of carbon dioxide emissions, in tons, needing to stay in the ground instead of being released to meet the easier of two new goals.

puts in. Nearly 90 per cent of scenarios for how to establish a safer temperature in the world involve going backward, but are also so far not very realistic, said Kevin Anderson, deputy director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research in Britain.

2070
By 2070, the world will have to emit close to zero greenhouse gases to achieve the easier of the two new targets set by Saturday's agreement.

Negative emissions involve more forests, maybe seeding the oceans, and possibly technology that sucks carbon out of the air and stores it underground. More biomass or forests require enormous land areas and direct capture of carbon from air is expensive, but with

a sustained research effort costs can probably be brought below \$100 per metric ton, said engineering and policy professor Granger Morgan of Carnegie Mellon University.

Leading up to the Paris Agreement, nearly every nation formed an individual action plan to cut or at least slow the growth of carbon pollution over the next decade or so. Richer, developed nations, like the United States, Europe and Japan, pledged to cut now. Developing nations that say they need fossil fuels to pull themselves out poverty pledged to slow the rate of growth now, and cut later.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CLIMATE PLAN

'The best chance we have'

President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry hailed the newly passed international climate change agreement as a major achievement that could help turn the tide on global warming, but got a quick reminder that Republicans will fight it all the way.

Obama said the climate agreement made Saturday night by almost 200 nations "can be a turning point for the world" and credited his administration for playing a key role.

He said the climate agreement "offers the best chance we have to save the one planet we have."

The immediate reaction of leading Republican critics was a stark reminder of the conflict that lies ahead.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said Obama is "making promises he can't keep" and should remember that the agreement "is subject to being shredded in 13 months."

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We've shown that the world has both the will and the ability to take on this challenge.

Barack Obama



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RETAIL

Holidays tricky to market: Expert

When something as simple as a red Starbucks cup stirred a controversy stateside over how businesses mark the approach of Christmas, Canadian retailers took notice.

Retailers across the country are well aware that how they market the holidays in an increasingly multicultural society is a sensitive issue. The way in which retailers approach the weeks leading up to the end of the year has evolved over time as businesses respond to customer reactions.

This year's Starbucks controversy, which hogged headlines in the U.S. in November, shone a spotlight on the issue. Executives said they wanted to embrace "simplicity and quietness." But some religious conservatives saw the new cup as a blow against tradition.

The entire episode underscored how carefully businesses need to consider their holiday marketing.

About a decade ago, retailers who didn't want to offend any segment of Canada's multicultural society removed the word Christmas from much of their marketing, said Michael LeBlanc, senior vice-president of marketing with the Retail Council of Canada.

Businesses now appear to have permission from most Canadians to use the word Christmas as Dec. 25 approaches without it being taken as an affront to those who don't celebrate the occasion, he said.

"Sites now say 'the holidays are here' and truly, I think that's a reflection of the season," said LeBlanc. "But then as you get in closer, you hone in on Christmas."

THE CANADIAN PRESS



As home prices soar out of reach for many, a growing number of Canadians are turning to alternative styles of housing — such as this tiny house in Victoria. CONTRIBUTED/ THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadians turn to pint-size housing

LIVING SPACES

Affordability, saving time some reasons for downsizing

Nine years ago, Thelma Fayle swapped her 4,000 square-foot home in a rural area of Victoria for a house measuring only nine feet wide on the inside after finding it exhausting to take care of her property.

The desire to save time is one of several factors cited by the growing number of Canadians who are turning to alternative styles of housing, ranging from narrow houses to tiny ones to those sandwiched into laneways between other homes.

Other factors include environmental considerations — smaller homes require less power to heat — and affordability concerns, as home prices in certain Canadian cities continue to soar out of reach for many.

In Toronto, developer Adam Ochshorn says his company, Curated Properties, has found a niche in building homes for families who have been priced out of the market for detached houses but don't want to migrate out to the suburbs or live in a glass tower. Ochshorn has several projects in the works that preserve elements of the traditional detached house format — multi-floor living with an outdoor terrace — but in unconventional spaces and at a lower price point.

For some, like Connor Fer-

ster, alternative living is less about affordability and more about wanting to live off the grid. In the winter of 2013 to 2014, Ferster ditched his studio apartment in downtown Calgary for a teepee 45 minutes outside the city. The following summer, he built a 96-square foot home on wheels.

Of course, the shift to compact living comes with some challenges. Ottawa-based architect and tiny home expert Andy Thomson, who himself is sharing a 500 square-foot space with his wife and their 11-year-old child, says the key to getting by in a constrained space is to have "furniture that's like a swiss army knife" — such as shelving units and beds that fold into the walls.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

ECONOMY

Liberal deficit could hit \$25 billion a year

Now that the federal Liberals have shied away from their vow to keep annual deficits under \$10 billion, they've latched on to another fiscal target.

The new government is suddenly talking about the debt-to-GDP ratio, promising to keep it on a downward track every year until the next election.

The government calculates its debt-to-GDP ratio by dividing total federal debt by the overall size of the economy, as measured by nominal GDP.

It represents a government's capacity to pay back debt — and focusing on it gives politicians more spending flexibility. By targeting debt-to-GDP, the Liberals could instead be prepared to run annual deficits of up to \$25 billion in the coming years and still lower the ratio — as long as the economy grows at a decent pace, economists say.

The adoption of the debt-to-GDP ratio as a "fiscal anchor" is not new. It was mentioned in the Liberal election platform as one of the ways to keep spending under control. The campaign rhetoric, however, largely focused on the \$10-billion annual deficit.

With uncashed election promises piling up on top of

0.9%

The government expects nominal GDP for 2015 to only grow by 0.9 per cent largely due to the squeeze of low oil prices, according to its fall fiscal update.

unforeseen shortfalls in the underlying fiscal plan, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has emphasized the more-reachable fiscal anchor in recent days.

"We will continue to decrease (the debt-to-GDP ratio) every single year because that's important for the fiscal health of our country," Trudeau said Wednesday. "We always targeted modest deficits, we had hoped it would be around \$10 billion — we will see if we will be able to hold at that level."

Plain old math dictates the ratio can continue to fall even if the public books slide into the red — at least to a point.

That's because even if the federal debt gets fatter, the ratio will edge downwards if the economy is growing faster than the debt.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

We always targeted modest deficits ... around \$10 billion — we will see if we will be able to hold at that level.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

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ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

Stumped? I'm here to help with your hard-to-buy-for list

You're very busy, I know.

You have 15 people to buy presents for, and that's not even counting yourself. Sure, you made a trip to the mall, but it took three days to find your way out again (online shopping has decimated your mall-navigation skills).

Well, I'm here to offer a few tips for those hard-to-buy-for listees.

Let's start in the obvious place: Justin Trudeau. Now that he's a sex symbol in the U.S. (those Vogue photos? Grrrr!), he's likely wondering what this means for his future memoir endeavours. Common Ground was a bit of political positioning ahead of the election. It's far too on-the-nose for a sex-symbol memoir, which should include much more innuendo and tongue-in-cheek asides, if not some actual cheek — and thus I recommend you gift him Burt Reynolds' new memoir *But Enough About Me* (no, not "Butt"). There's apparently a lot more to Burt than his 1970s nude centrefold, and Trudeau, reduced to his broad chest, strong jaw and wavy hair by the U.S. press, may need, one day, to make a similar argument after posing tastefully nude to raise awareness about climate change.

On to the next: Angela Merkel, *Time* magazine 2015 Person of the Year.

Perhaps you don't speak German or know much about Germany or even how to properly pronounce her name, though it's really not that hard (it's a hard "g"). You perhaps do know that she is considered a modern-day international-diplomacy and left-wing-enough Wonder Woman. Hence, the perfect gift is Jill Lepore's *The Secret History of Wonder Woman*. There are always lessons for politicians to be found in history, and this book charts Wonder Woman's connection to first-wave feminism and details of her creator's love of S&M. Like I said, much to learn.

Of course your shopping list won't be dealt with purely by a trip to your local, independent bookstore that's been around so long it's practically heritage designated.

So, for the ISIL fighter on your list, you'll need to head online and research the right fine French perfume, or perhaps a Twix chocolate bar. Let me explain: in a recent interview on National Public Radio, a man who'd escaped from an ISIL-controlled town detailed the fascination ISIL fighters have with Western goods, even luxury cars. So if you can afford it, splurge on a Ferrari.

And there you have it: Christmas made easy! Happy shopping and ho ho ho!

Metro MONDAY POLL

One nation under vaccination

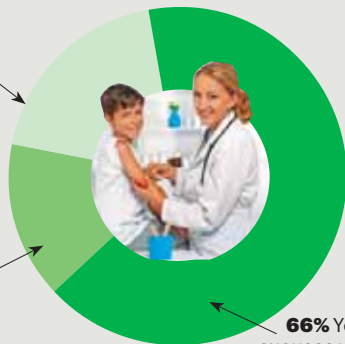
Visit metronews.ca every Friday to have your say.

Under a proposed Ontario law, parents will have to attend an education session at the local public-health unit if they want a vaccine exemption for non-medical reasons. Few things have been more explosively controversial — or more maligned — in recent years than vaccinations, though evidence conclusively shows they're safe and effective. In fact, they're so effective that many of us have never personally encountered a vaccine-preventable illness. We asked our readers for forgotten family stories about the fear-filled days before shots prevented some of the most deadly diseases.

1 Should all routine vaccinations be mandatory in Canada?

19% No, it should be up to parents

15% No, but there should be a serious consequence for not vaccinating (i.e. a financial penalty, or being banned from school)

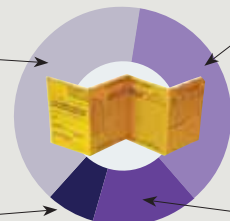


66% Yes, no excuses unless there is a valid health exception

2 How do you keep track of vaccinations for yourself or your family?

41% Old-fashioned paper

7% Digitally/with an app



36% I trust my doctor, school or health unit to keep track

16% I don't. One of us is probably due for a booster

3 What's your experience with vaccine-preventable diseases?

40% I've never had one & don't know anyone who has. 32% I've suffered from a vaccine-preventable disease. 17% A family member or someone I know has had one. 11% Either myself, someone I know or a family member has suffered permanent effects of a vaccine-preventable disease.

We had to cancel a trip because someone at my son's daycare got chickenpox.

My grandfather was partially paralyzed for life due to polio.

I contracted measles as a small child and was left partly deaf.

I had measles, mumps and chickenpox before there were vaccines. They were all miserable.

WE ASKED Metro readers

Blame the oil bust for suicides? Not so fast

FOOTNOTES

Omar Mouallem



Between January and June this year, 327 Albertans took their own lives. That's 30 per cent more people than in 2014. We don't know their gender, their age, their occupations. We don't know if their deaths are geographically concentrated or spread across the province.

All we know is they're not calling. From Fort McMurray to Calgary, crises line directors told me their phones were comparatively quiet, despite the spike. Distress centres like Edmonton's Support Network don't report a significant increase in calls about suicide.

The incomplete information leaves many mental health agencies guessing. That wasn't always the case.

Until 2009, Alberta's chief medical examiner issued a re-

port that illuminated answers to these questions. In 1984, for instance, farmer suicides were three times higher than a few years before, allowing Alberta's suicidologist (that's right, there was an assigned suicidologist) to study the phenomenon further.

In the early 1990s, amidst another economic recession, another suicide crisis led to the formation of Men at Risk — a program in Grande Prairie aimed at tradesmen. It taught co-workers to look for signs of emotional struggle. "It tends to be a very manly place, where men are expected to be men and there's a stigma on mental health issues they don't want to discuss," says Gladys Blackmore, who directs the suicide prevention centre in charge of Men at Risk.

So why aren't suicide stats as detailed as they once were? I asked a spokesperson for the justice department several times. The department now

carries the responsibility of releasing the blank numbers, but the spokesperson said it wasn't mandatory.

They're now released through Vital Statistics' annual review, which summarizes births, marriages, deaths and stillbirths. With time, we'll know the details of how these people took their lives as well as their ages and gender. But the more telling demographics that aid agencies use in their prevention services will be a mystery.

"Alberta seems to have a habit of creating a focus on suicide when a crisis or increase occurs, but as things stabilize the services disappear or are downgraded," says Blackmore. The current bump has many pointing to the oil bust, but she's not so sure. She thinks it might be the boom — a dilution of services in good times. "It seems our current situation may not be as much related to the economic

downturn as it is to inconsistent delivery of mental health services," she said.

The good news is the Alberta government is reviewing its mental health strategy, regardless of the price of a barrel of oil, and the justice minister is reconsidering working with the chief medical examiner to open data again.

"If mental health organizations and professionals do not have the data they need on this issue, we'd like to hear from them," says Minister of Justice Kathleen Ganley. "We are willing to work with (the chief coroner) so mental health professionals can continue their valuable and important work."

The bad news? If indeed this suicide spike is related to the economic downturn, then it's just the beginning.

Omar Mouallem (@omar_aok) lives in Edmonton and edits the Yards magazine.

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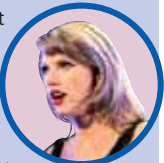
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GOSSIP BRIEFS

Has Swift gone mad with trademarking power?

Taylor Swift decided to close out her banner year by trying to trademark a whole slew of terms, including "Blank space," "Swiftmas" and "1989." Swift filed 20 trademark applications in all. NED EHRBAR/FOR METRO



Elizabeth Olsen dumped fiancé over the phone

Oh man, this is rough. Actor Boyd Holbrook, former fiancé of Elizabeth Olsen, apparently feels like enough time has gone by to vent his frustrations about the demise of their relationship — a breakup neither had officially confirmed before now.



"On the same day that my best friend died, I got a call from my girl to tell me it was over," Holbrook tells Man of the World magazine, referring to the split as a "divorce," even. The one-two punch of Olsen's breakup call and friend David Armstrong's death led Holbrook to become "consumed with my own personal depression," he says, though he did eventually cheer himself up over the past 10 months.

NED EHRBAR/FOR METRO



Fashion Santa is the new red

Paul Mason, also known as Fashion Santa, has gained international attention for his collaboration with Yorkdale Shopping Centre as the Toronto mall's Fashion Santa. Mason is taking selfies with shoppers to raise funds for The Hospital for Sick Children. CHRIS NICHOLLS/HANDOUT/THE CANADIAN PRESS

PAUL MASON

Long-time model takes selfies for SickKids

Paul Mason has devoted three decades to modelling, but the worldwide attention he's received for his stylish take on Santa Claus is a fashionable first. Toronto's Yorkdale Shopping Centre enlisted Mason as its resident Fashion Santa and the face of the mall's holiday campaign.

During the festive season, he is also posing for selfies with shoppers in support of SickKids Foundation, which raises funds on behalf of Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children.

But beyond his own white beard and a penchant for red and white, Mason shares little else in common with the jolly old elf — and that's part of what's made him an overnight sensation.

The 6-foot-1 model has made a splash posing in sleek designer wear and striking poses in and around the mall showcasing his modern twist on St. Nick.

The images have gone viral, garnering attention from magazines like Time, Fortune and Harper's Bazaar, and press from across the pond from the Telegraph newspaper and BBC.

"It's just the most unexpected thing," said Mason, 51.

"Of course, I've had a long career — 30 years as a model prior to social media — and this is something else. I've never seen anything like it.

"Through working all over the world, I have friends in all the major cities, and collectively they've come together and just supported what's going on. But

they're equally as shocked as anyone else."

Mason collaborated with Yorkdale last year, but the shopping centre embarked on a larger promotional push with this year's campaign, said marketing director Lucia Connor.

Connor said she believes part of the intense interest stems from the ability of adults to reconnect with a part of their childhood.

"When we speak to some of the customers that come through to see Santa, the adults get so excited and they say: 'The last time I took a photo with

Santa I was young, I was little," she said.

"I think now what people are able to do is now proudly display their own photo of adult Fashion Santa, and instead of the mantel, they're displaying it on their social media feeds."

Mason is slated to take on Fashion Santa duty at the mall on Dec. 18, 19, 20 and 23.

For every selfie taken and posted on social media and accompanied by the hashtag "YorkdaleFashionSanta," Yorkdale will donate \$1 to SickKids Foundation, up to \$10,000.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING


Miley Cyrus with George Clooney, left, and Bill Murray in *A Very Murray Christmas*. CONTRIBUTED

Miley puts the merry in Murray Christmas

THE SHOW A VERY MURRAY CHRISTMAS (NETFLIX)

THE MOMENT THE MILEY MIRACLE

For 40 minutes, we've watched

people be sad. Bill Murray has the Christmas blues. A snowstorm has kept his guests from showing up at Manhattan's Carlyle Hotel to tape his holiday special. He trades barbs with his agents (Amy Poehler and

Julie White). He talks to a distressed bride and groom (Rashida Jones and Jason Schwartzman). Finally, something magical happens: Murray passes out, and into his dream, on a

SOUNDING JOY
Bill Murray's "natural role is sending out quips from the sidelines. Miley is a star."

sleigh, rides... Miley Cyrus. She wears a fur-trimmed red mini with matching pumps. She sits on a white grand piano and belts out Silent Night. She saves Christmas — and Murray's ass.

I'm not saying there isn't a place for sadness during the holidays. There is. But this is ironic sadness, and Christmas and irony do not go well together. You end up feeling nothing.

Murray, director Sophia Coppola, and writer Mitch Glazer clearly are enamoured with the random nature of holiday specials — how celebs just show up and sing. Unfortunately, they don't seem to realize that the randomness had a point: the singing (example: Bing Crosby and David Bowie's famous duet of The Little Drummer Boy). This has entirely too much croaking. It's an un-special.

Also, it may be heretic for me to say this, but I'm growing weary of Murray. He was smart to dole himself out sparingly all these years. When you see too much of him, you realize how thin his schtick is. His natural role is sending out quips from the sidelines. Miley is a star.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

ANIMATED HOLIDAY SPECIAL

A Nutcracker story with a lot of puck

Only in Canada would an animated The Nutcracker special be given a hockey twist.

The Curse of Clara: a Holiday Tale is based on Vickie Fagan's autobiographical short story recalling her days dancing in The Nutcracker for the National Ballet of Canada. The year is 1972 and a young ballerina reaches into the hockey world for inspiration — specifically, a legendary Canada-U.S.S.R. showdown.

One of the stars of that unforgettable series was former Boston Bruins scoring ace Phil Esposito. The centreman led the NHL professionals to a come-from-behind win against the perennial Olympic hockey champs from what was then known as the Soviet Union. In the special, Esposito's heroics — and charisma — inspire a young ballerina to dance to her goal.

Esposito lends his voice to the special along with veteran Hockey Night in Canada play-


Hockey meets ballet in *The Curse of Clara*. SMILEY GUY STUDIOS

by-play announcer Bob Cole — who called the actual Summit Series on radio that September of 1972 — former prima ballerina Karen Kain, Sheila McCarthy, Sara Botsford and Saara Chaudry.

The special premieres Dec. 14 on CBC. THE CANADIAN PRESS

WILE E. ESPOSITO
Asked what cartoon character he most relates to, Esposito laughed and said, "Wile E. Coyote — except he got beat up all the time!"

DIRECTOR JAMES CAMERON

Spare the rod, spoil the Avatar sequels

Poor James Cameron just won't let this one go. As we're just days away from the sixth anniversary of the release of Avatar, Cameron wants to remind you that those sequels he keeps threatening are totally still going to happen. Really. All three — yes, three — of them.

"I'm in the process of doing another pass through all three scripts right now," Cameron tells Entertainment Weekly. "Just refining. That's in parallel with the design process. The design process is very mature at this point. We've been designing for about a year and a half. All the characters, settings and creatures are all pretty much [set]."

And let's just say he's feeling a bit nervous about the whole thing. Obviously, expectations are going to be very high on these films, especially on Avatar 2, to make sure it wasn't just some big fluke the first time. So we've got to deliver. I've created a nice rod for my own back, so they say."

Wait, who says that? I've never heard that expression before. NED EHREBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD



BLOCKBUSTERS

Is the new Star Wars movie destined to be the biggest of all time?

Though several signs point in that direction, the outcome isn't guaranteed.

The movie is on track to have the biggest December opening ever, topping The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey, which took in \$85 million in the U.S. and Canada on its opening weekend in December 2012.

Whether Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force

Awakens bests the biggest grosser of all time — Avatar, with \$2.8 billion worldwide — depends on word of mouth and whether fans love it enough to watch it multiple times through the new year. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GOSSIP BRIEF

Besties Jen and Amy plan matching Globes looks

They really are the best friends that ever were, apparently. When Jennifer Lawrence found herself up against pal Amy Schumer in this year's Golden Globes race, the Joy star took it as an opportunity for fun rather than a chance for competition to drive a wedge in their friendship.

"We're going to try to figure out to wear the exact same thing. That's my mission. I really want us to wear the same thing," Lawrence tells E! News. "She's going to have to wear Dior. I'm just going to have to have Dior make two of whatever they're making for me."

Simple enough! Because nothing says friendship like creating an unfair "who wore it better" scenario. NED EHREBAR/METRO HOLLYWOOD



Jennifer Lawrence left, and Amy Schumer. GETTY IMAGES

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BANKSY GRAFFITI ARTIST ADDRESSES REFUGEE CRISIS Street artist Banksy has taken on the migrant crisis in a new mural at a migrant camp in France. The elusive artist has depicted the late Apple guru Steve Jobs — whose biological father was from Syria — carrying a black garbage bag and an early model of the Macintosh computer. The artist best known for his subversive street art has never disclosed his identity. His publicist, Jo Brooks, confirmed Saturday that the work found at the encampment in Calais is genuine. Jobs was adopted. His biographer, Walter Isaacson, has described the computer genius's biological father, Abdulfattah Jandali, as a graduate student who came from a prominent family and studied in the U.S. Banksy has travelled the world to comment on war, child poverty and the environment. MICHEL SPINGLER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Russian creatives try to polish Putin's bad rep

PATRIOTISM

Movies and jewelry line cast Putin as country's hero

It may not be Spider-Man, but a group of young Russians is creating a new generation of superheroes in an effort to stir up patriotic fervour, and give President Vladimir Putin a boost.

The designers, writers, artists and animators working in an organization called Set, which translates as "network" or "net," build their story lines in a space that could be confused with a hip Silicon Valley startup. But this group prefers to think of itself as anything but Western.

Set is creating a series of new superhero films featuring everyday Russians who face challenges and prove themselves to be patriots.

"We don't need to look for good deeds far away if we can find them here," said Daniil Zotov, the creative director. He



Clothing designers discuss their latest outfits at the headquarters of a pro-Kremlin youth centre called Set in Moscow. IVAN SEKRETAREV/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

said real-life heroes are far preferable to fantasy figures such as Superman and Spider-Man.

Most of the people who work on Set's film and design projects are unpaid volunteers, the group said, motivated by patriotism rather than profit.

The initiative is a contemporary take on an old Russian theme of love of the mother-

land, with Putin as its ultimate hero.

One team of designers has crafted a new clothing and jewelry line entitled "Putin-versteher," German for "Putin sympathizer." A ring with a miniature Putin face set on a silver band is one of the group's bestselling items.

"If before I asked a foreigner

what they associate with Russia, he would have said 'matty-osshka,' 'balalaika,' and 'bears,'" said designer Gleb Krainik, referring to the famous Russian nesting dolls and a traditional string instrument.

"Now, any foreigners, whether they like Putin or not, would say Putin."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christmas is in the mail



Oh Clark Griswold. Unlike the hero of National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation, there is no need to settle for the Jelly of the Month club. Instead this season, try some of these decidedly more appealing box-of-the-month deals.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

BarkBox

Cost: \$29 per month for one month, up to \$228 for 12 months, with \$5 extra shipping charge to send boxes to Canada.

What's inside: Surprise Fido monthly with this box of pup-approved treats, chews, and toys to get their tails wagging. Pick a box based on your dog's size.

How it started: Founders Carly Strife, Matt Meeker and Henrik Werdelin had a hard time finding products they liked at their local pet stores for their pups. "So they decided to put together a box that would surprise and delight and give the dogs a piece of mail every month," says Alexis Anderson, BarkBox's head of partnerships.

Website: barkbox.com



Spicy subscriptions

Cost: Boxes range from \$14.95 for a single product/monthly to \$250 for a year. Shipping to Canada is an extra \$6.50.

What's inside: From lubes, lotions and oils to toys and accessories, this sexy subscription is sure to surprise. Oh and yes, the company ships discreetly.

How it got started: Adi and his girlfriend had started dating and wanted to explore some intimate items — only it was a bit intimidating for his partner. That's when he realized it probably wasn't just her who felt like that.

Website: spicysubscriptions.com



Office grocery

Cost: From \$45 to \$130.

What's inside: Weekly, biweekly or monthly boxes have subscribers choosing fruit, bulk snacks, trail mixes and mixed bars.

How it got started: Rory Stavro-Pearce already knew the business — after all, he'd been running a healthy vending machine company, Organic Vending for almost seven years.

Website: officegrocery.com

Panty by post

Cost: From \$45 to \$380 depending on the line of briefs you choose.

What's inside: Underwear by mail? You bet — choose from the basic, signature (the site's most popular panties) or premium lines to surprise the man or woman in your life monthly with a new set of undies.

How it got started: An appreciator of all things French, Vancouver-based Natalie Grunberg wanted to share that "Frenchness" with others. "I wanted to deliver something that was little because of shipping rates, that was something everything needs and that was French," she says. She spends part of her summers in the Riviera.

Website: pantybypost.com



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Know the cost of home ownership

PLANNING

Your budget needs to cover more than just the mortgage

Gail Vaz-Oxlade
For Metro Canada



Owning a home is an expensive proposition.

People think all you have to do is figure out whether you can afford the mortgage payments and taxes. They're wrong.

Owning a home requires planning and a big commitment in terms of time and money. Lots of people who think that they're ready have seriously miscalculated. And then their dream home turns into a money pit.

Another mistake new homeowners make is not changing anything about the way they spend their money once they move into a place of their own.

Sure, their housing costs have gone up, but so what? If you're used to buying whatever you want, whenever you want, and you keep up that bad habit, in no time at all, you'll be floundering.

Time to swap some bad habits for some good ones.

It's sometimes pretty hard to see what you're doing wrong, so it's good to know that your partner will be willing and able to spot your flaws and point them out to you. Ha!

And, of course, the best way to see the error of one's ways is to put a dollar value on the stuff you've been buying.

Whether it's junk food or expensive shampoo, once you add up what that indulgence is costing over the long term, you'll want to stop.

Sometimes even the most obvious misstep can't be avoided simply because people hate giving up on an idea once they've committed to it. That's where doing the math becomes the bright light that makes it clear if you'll make it or not as new

homeowners.

Time to make a new budget incorporating all the costs associated with owning a home, and adjusting the amount you'll spend elsewhere to compensate for higher shelter costs.

Add up the mortgage payment, property taxes, condo fees, utilities and insurance. Don't forget to budget between about two per cent (in cities) to four per cent (in the country) of the value of your home for home maintenance every year to keep a house in reasonable shape.

If you have an older home that needs work, you should use the higher number.

Subtract the amount you're currently spending to keep a roof over your head.

The difference — the increase in your shelter costs — has to come from somewhere, so what are you not going to spend money on to have that home of your dreams? Will you give up daily coffee, lunch out, that winter vacation you so look forward to?



Owning a home comes with unexpected costs. Make sure you budget two to four per cent of your home's value for yearly maintenance costs. ISTOCK

Something's gotta give, and here's where you decide what that something (or those some-things) will be.

When you work out how much you'll need in your budget you'll probably choke.

Once you get over your sput-

tering, know that since your home is likely to be your biggest financial asset, you better take good care of it. From lawn care to repainting every few years, from a new furnace to replacing the roof, home ownership is an expensive business.

If you aren't up for the responsibility, renting is always an option.

For more money advice, visit Gail's website at gailvazoxlade.com

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ADVICE

The key to negotiating with and influencing people? Rapport

Raquel Laneri
Metro | New York

One of the most popular self-help books ever written is called *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, and, frankly, it's no wonder: Who doesn't want to will others into doing what one wants, whether through one's presence, words or sheer charisma?

Well, life coach Niurka — yes, just Niurka, like Madonna and Cher — says the key to such persuasiveness, and to one's empowerment, is communication, and there's one very important component to that: rapport.

"Rapport is essential in all negotiations, because when there's rapport the decision-maker will want to work with you, even if you're not saying the perfect

thing," says Niurka, whose new book is *Supreme Influence: Change Your Life with the Power of the Language You Use*. But creating rapport is a subtle art: you can't exactly fake affinity, or chemistry. We asked the expert for her advice on establishing that kind of connection.

Be aware

The first step to establishing rapport is awareness: after all, you have to be self-aware enough to know when you aren't establishing a rapport with someone, or when you lose it. "Oftentimes people communicate too soon," she says. "They're so in tune with what they want to say rather than being totally present with the person and the situation." Notice your target's body language, her breathing, her mood, and try to play off that.

Care about the bigger picture

When talking to a boss or supervisor, don't make it about you, you, you. "You have to authentically care about the bigger picture, not just your agenda," advises Niurka. "Before you go in ask yourself not just 'What do I want?' or 'How can I get what I want in this conversation?' but 'What's important to this

person, to this company as a whole?'"

Ask questions

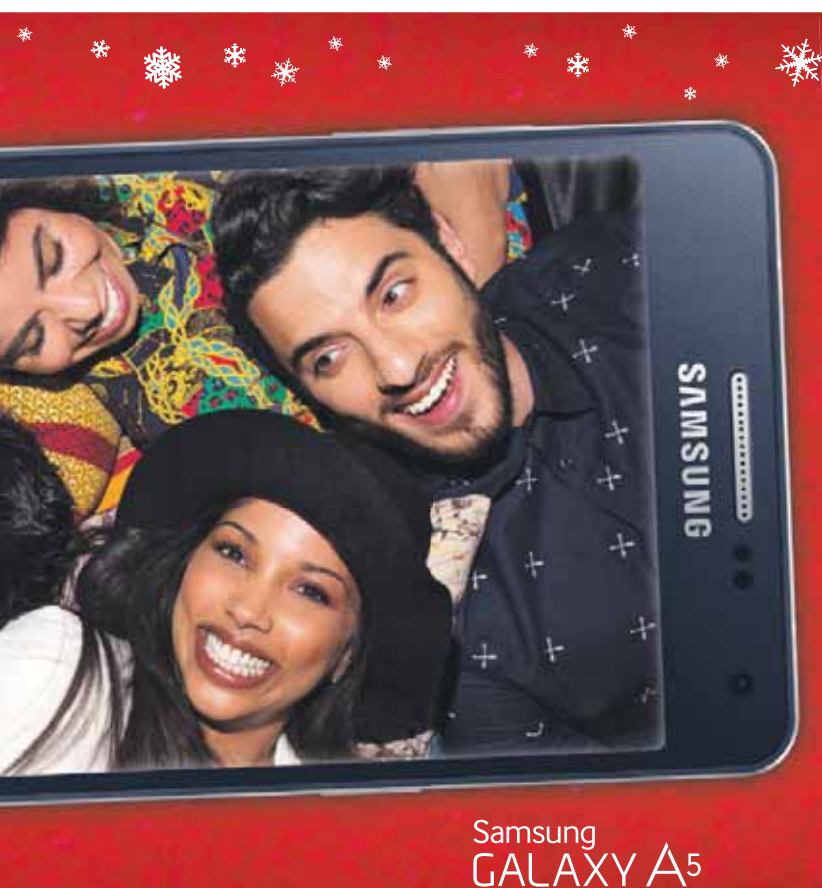
One important — and easy — way to establish rapport and show that you genuinely care about the other person's needs and concerns is to ask questions. "Say: 'I'm curious about what's working, or what isn't working,' in terms of a particular context — or, 'If you can change one thing in this department what would it be?'" suggests Niurka. "You want someone to get passionate and then connect on that point of passion: you don't want to be the one who's passionate and trying to sell them on it. You want them to have a buy-in."

One more thing ...

"When you're going to an important meeting — whether it's one-on-one with your boss or giving a big presentation to a group of people — be clear on your intention, without attachment to outcome," says Niurka. "You don't want to get tunnel vision, so you've got to be clear what is the essence of what it is that you're inspired to create or achieve and then be open to all the different ways you can make that a reality."



The first step to establishing rapport with someone is awareness. Be mindful of body language, breathing mood, and try to play off that, advises life coach Niurka. ISTOCK



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Virtanen back as Canada trims fat

WORLD JUNIOR HOCKEY

Canuck rookie welcomed back as forward trio, D-liner are cut

Canada's junior team made four cuts on Sunday — and one important addition.

The Vancouver Canucks gave forward Jake Virtanen permission to join Canada's national junior team, a little over an hour after Hockey Canada completed its first round of cuts to its selection camp roster. Forwards Pierre-Luc Dubois, Michael Dal Colle and Spencer Watson were cut from the team along with defenceman Jakob Chychrun.

Virtanen is one of four players returning from last year's gold medal-winning team, joining forwards Brayden Point and Lawson Crouse as well as defenceman Joe Hicketts. He's the only member of Canada's junior team with regular-season experience in the NHL.

"He brings a power-forward element," said Hicketts in the lobby of the team's hotel in suburban Toronto. "Anytime you can get a player of that calibre back it helps the lineup."

Virtanen was in downtown Toronto playing with the American Hockey League's Utica Comets, who he'd been assigned to on a conditioning stint, and will join Canada immediately. The team will leave for Imatra, Finland, late Monday for practices and exhibition games before the world championship tournament begins in Helsinki on Dec. 26.



Canada's Jake Virtanen at the 2015 IIHF World Junior Championships. DENIS PAJOT/GETTY IMAGES

The 19-year-old right-winger from New Westminster, B.C., and fellow rookie Jared McCann both made the Canucks roster on Nov. 1, passing their nine-game tryout period. He has a goal and three assists in 19 games with Vancouver and has no points in two games with Utica.

The cuts came after the second of two exhibition games between Canada and a team of all-stars from Can-

adian universities. Canada's junior team now has 15 forwards, nine defencemen and three goaltenders with more cuts to come when the team is in Europe.

Samuel Montembeault made 33 saves as Canada shut out the Canadian Interuniversity Sport team 5-0 on Sunday afternoon to conclude Canada's junior selection camp.

Montembeault was added to Canada's roster on Tuesday after Mackenzie Blackwood was suspended by the Ontario Hockey League for eight games.

The International Ice Hockey Federation honours CHL suspensions, forcing Blackwood to miss the first two games of the international tournament.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

“Any time you get a player of that calibre back it helps your lineup.”
Defenceman Joe Hicketts

IN BRIEF

Blackhawks' Kane ups point streak to 26 games

Patrick Kane extended his points streak to 26 games, Corey Crawford made 30 saves for his second straight shutout, and the Chicago Blackhawks beat the Vancouver Canucks 4-0 on Sunday night.

Kane, the NHL's leading scorer with 46 points, had the second assist on Duncan Keith's power-play goal midway through the first. Dennis Rasmussen, Andrew Shaw and Brandon Mashinter also scored for the Blackhawks, winners of four of five.

Kane surpassed Sidney Crosby's 25-game streak, set in 2010-11, for the longest in the league since 1992-93. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Homan outsweeps Jones to win Canadian Open

Ottawa's Rachel Homan scored a pair in the final end for an 8-7 victory over Winnipeg's Jennifer Jones in Sunday's final at the Canadian Open.

It was the third straight Grand Slam victory for Homan, who won the Masters and the National earlier this season. Toronto's John Epping defeated Brad Gushue of St. John's 7-4 in the men's final.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Newton's brilliance keeps Panthers purring, perfect

Cam Newton added to his MVP resume, completing 15 of 21 passes for 265 yards and three touchdowns, and the unbeaten Carolina Panthers defeated the Atlanta Falcons 38-0 on Sunday to clinch a first-round bye in the NFC playoffs.

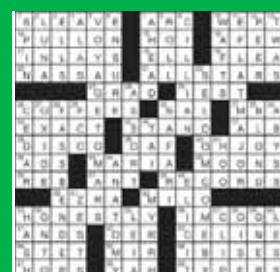
Newton connected on scoring strikes of 74, 46 and 4 yards to extend the Panthers' start to 13-0.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers.

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5	6	7	9	3	1	2	8	4
2	4	3	8	7	6	1	5	9
8	1	9	4	2	5	3	7	6
4	7	8	5	9	3	6	2	1
1	9	2	7	6	8	5	4	3
6	3	5	1	4	2	8	9	7
3	5	4	6	8	9	7	1	2
9	8	6	2	1	7	4	3	5
7	2	1	3	5	4	9	6	8

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RECIPE Spicy Beef Tacos



PHOTO: MAMA VISNTEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

These easy tacos get a zing of heat from chili but a warmth from cumin and cinnamon.

Ready in

Prep time: 30 minutes

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 large sweet potato, diced into bite-size pieces
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp salt, divided
- 1 lb organic lean ground beef
- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp dried oregano
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp pepper
- 1/4 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup shaved Monterey Jack cheese
- A handful of chopped fresh cilantro
- Salsa

- 8 corn tortillas, warmed according to package directions

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400 F.
2. In a bowl, toss sweet potato with olive oil and 1/2 tsp salt. Spread sweet potato pieces out in a single layer on a lined baking sheet. Bake in the oven for 5 to 7 minutes. Toss and then bake another 3 to 5 minutes, or until fork tender. Remove potatoes from oven and place in a bowl.
3. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until browned, about 10 minutes.
4. In a small bowl, blend chili powder, cumin, cinnamon and dried oregano. Stir into the meat the garlic, spice blend, pepper and remaining salt; cook for another 2 minutes. Remove beef from heat and transfer to serving dish.
5. Place beef, sweet potato, slices of red onion, cheese, fresh cilantro, salsa and tortillas out on the table for taco assembly. Enjoy.

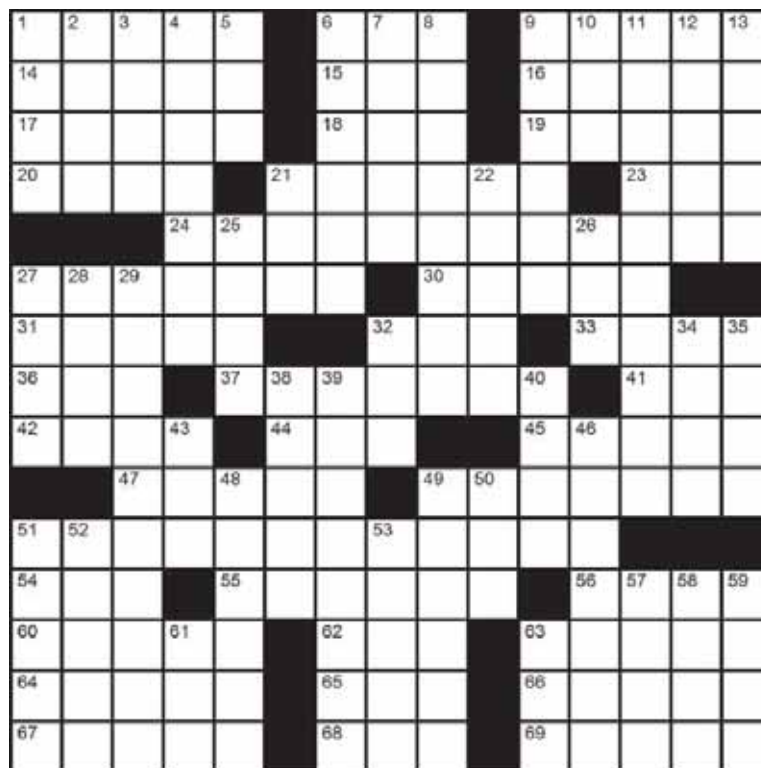
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CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN

ACROSS

1. Possessed, in ye olden days
6. Winter roads worry
9. Country legend Johnny's
14. Join
15. Ho! Ho! Ho! X-__ (Dec. 25th)
16. Tear that paper: 2 wds.
17. Concluded
18. Kitty's rival
19. Irish rebel Rory
20. Momentarily
21. __ mustache (Sported by Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle)
23. "Whistle __ the Lave O't": Song by Scottish poet Robert Burns
24. Holiday candies by #49-Down celebrating their 130th anniversary: 2 wds.
27. Noncompliant
30. Flair
31. Lagoon-in-the-middle island
32. " __ recall..."
33. Stroller, to a Brit
36. Neither's partner
37. Appetizer served with plum sauce: 2 wds.
41. Pasta names suffix
42. 'Within'-meaning prefix
44. Swiss peak
45. Mr. Williams of "Happy Days"
47. Animal of The Andes
49. Doorkeeper
51. What people do when they sign



- into their e-mail accounts: 2 wds.
54. Bit of food
55. Of bears
56. 'Demo' suffix (Politician sort)
60. Get __ (Score in hockey)
62. "How was __ know?"

63. The Congo's former name
64. "Irma la __" (1963)
65. Grandma
66. Stick on
67. Fashion show walk
68. Unit of work
69. Bug: 2 wds.

DOWN

1. Shades
2. __ Domini (AD)
3. "Thank You" singer
4. Sheet that when painted over reveals a design beneath
5. Bill's bogus buddy

6. Influential effect
7. Shower sealant
8. Starbucks serving
9. Surname of one of Neil Young's bandmates
10. Purpose
11. Cutlery user's slip of the tongue?

12. Just-got-the-job person
13. 'Trick' suffixes
21. Get the glory
22. Up to a certain time
25. Fit, fiddle-style
26. "Superman's Dead" rock gr. from Toronto
27. Stand-up comedian Mr. Cook
28. Collar type
29. Archaeology in New Brunswick... Historic trading post in Saint John: 2 wds.
32. Dadaist Jean
34. Kind of buffalo
35. Duluth's state, for short
38. Nintendo enthusiast
39. Translucent envelope material for storing stamps
40. Tardy
43. Previous
46. Instant coffee brand
48. Protector-from-harm charm
49. Family-owned New Brunswick chocolatier since 1873
50. Bronze __
51. Map's lines, often
52. Grain fungus
53. Ravi Shankar's instrument
57. Fissure
58. Opera offering
59. Communicate, techie-style
61. Prefix with 'puncture'
63. 'Zig' add-on

★ IT'S ALL IN THE STARS by Sally Brompton

Aries March 21 - April 20
Watch your back and think twice before giving anyone the benefit of the doubt. The Sun may be moving through your fellow Fire sign of Sagittarius but so is Saturn, planet of limitation, and that means someone may be working against you.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
You may not want to but it's time to give up on a goal that requires the kind of cash you no longer have. Let it go and next time aim for something cheaper.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
You will get conflicting advice but you know what must be done, so do it. Trust your instincts and hope for the best. The best will happen.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You may be tempted to call the bluff of those you are negotiating with and hold out for a better offer but the planets warn that is not a good idea. You would be wise to seal the deal on the terms being offered.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Your confidence could slump as Saturn makes it easy to see nothing but grey skies. Your problems may be all in the mind but if you believe bad things are going to happen then they most likely will.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Someone is refusing to see sense. You tried to point them in the right direction, so if they make a mess of things it's their own fault.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Some people may say that you're losing your edge, that you are not as decisive and dynamic as you used to be, but it isn't true. Even a Libra is entitled to relax once in a while.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Try not to appear too eager today. If you can give others, especially rivals, the impression that you don't care whether you win or lose you'll lull them into a false sense of security.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
You can't change past failures, so there is no point in dwelling on them. However, while the Sun is in your sign you can have a few successes, so stop being negative and start doing things that get you noticed.

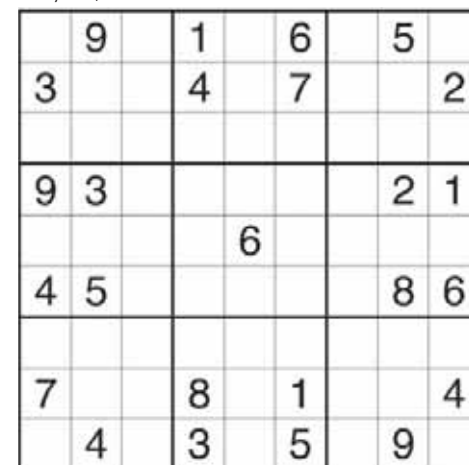
Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Something is bothering you and your rivals and enemies are beginning to pick up on your fear. Don't worry about whether you are moving in the right direction because all roads lead to the same destination.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
If you try to live up to other people's image of you then you are likely to exhaust yourself for no good reason. Your health should be your main concern.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
If someone in a position of authority asks you to do something of a questionable nature today you must turn them down flat. Principle comes before power.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9



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